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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (6/19): CAN HAMAS ENFORCE THE TRUCE?

Main Stories:

All dailies open with extensive coverage of the truce between Hamas and Israel which took effect June 19. According to the dailies, the ceasefire was welcomed by Palestinian Prime Minister Fayyad, the United Nations, the European Commission, Washington and many other local and international entities. Al-Hayat Al-Jadida's lead story headlines, "America expressed hope that the ceasefire will lead to a halt in rocket attacks." Israel confirmed agreement to the truce, though Israeli Premier Olmert deemed it "fragile" in a June 18 statement to the press. Papers report that Israel will begin easing the blockade on Gaza starting next week. Coverage also notes that talks on the release of Israeli soldier Shalit will resume on June 22 through Egyptian mediation.

Hardship in Gaza is highlighted in front page photos: Al Ayyam shows people lined up outside a gas station, waiting for the rare fuel, while Al-Quds leads with a photo of a man selling corn oil to Gaza drivers to use as gasoline. Violence is also highlighted. Papers report that just hours before the truce took effect, six Gazans were injured in an Israeli air strike and 38 rockets were launched from Gaza into southern Israel.

Internal Palestinian dialogue wins notable front page coverage in all dailies. Al-Ayyam's front page quotes Hamas leader Ismael Haniyyah confirming that, "Cairo will soon call for Palestinian-Palestinian dialogue." Related coverage notes that Palestinian President Abbas has called upon Arab leaders to put mechanisms into place to implement the Yemen initiative aimed at ending internal Palestinian disagreement.

Citing different wires, all dailies front page quotes from Jordanian King Abdullah warning that the failure to establish a Palestinian

state by the end of the year would be, "very dangerous." King Abdullah added, "Palestinians will not accept any alternative home to Palestine." His comments came during a celebration for Noble prize winners in Petra city on June 19.

The dailies report that Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad and European Commission Representative in Jerusalem John Kjaer signed a financing agreement worth 14 million on June 18. The EU funding will be used for institution building activities in preparation of a future Palestinian state.

On the Syrian- Israeli front, Al-Ayyam carries an AFP story quoting Israeli Premier Olmert saying, "I am not far from direct talks with Syria." Meanwhile, Syrian President Al-Assad is quoted saying, "developments in the region are very optimistic ones." On the same topic, Hamas leader in Damascus, Khalid Masha'al, told Reuters that, "Syria will not bow to Israeli pressure and boycott Hamas," Al-Ayyam's front page reports.

A photo of a member of the Palestinian national security forces, proudly opening the door of a brand new vehicle, appears on page two of Al Quds June 18 edition. The first batch of 35 vehicles which are part of the U.S. security assistance package, arrived on June 17. A total of 145 will be delivered by August

BLOCK QUOTES:

1. Al-Quds runs its daily editorial entitled, "Who can pressure

JERUSALEM 00001029 002 OF 002

Israel?" (6/19): "Secretary Rice admitted the dangerous consequences of Jewish settlement activities in the Palestinian Territories, especially in East Jerusalem. During her last visit, she described it as a phenomenon that contradicts current negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis and that it seeks to prejudice the outcome of negotiations, as well as being an obstacle to the peace process. Later, American diplomatic sources stated that the United States does not differentiate between settlements in the West Bank and Jerusalem... there is a sense, even if it is not accurate or realistic, that the American Administration has not pressured Israel enough, or that it has not used every available means to convince Israel to stop settlement activities... The question remains as to what will happen if the next six months of Bush's term end without reaching the needed agreement? Which international entity will be able to assume the role of influencing and pressuring Israel towards the conclusion of a just and lasting peace... ? "

2. Independent Al-Ayyam carries an op-ed by columnist Abdullah Awad entitled, "No truce... no peace... do not be sad" (6/19): "This is not the first time that the Jewish state and the Palestinians in Gaza agree to a truce, and it will not be the last time. There were many truces before this one, but most of them only lasted for a short period before they evaporated, as if nothing had ever happened. It is true that Hamas controls the situation in Gaza with an iron hand. But it is also true that, in the absence of united, strategic Palestinian policy, there will be no guarantee that Palestinian groups will halt rocket attacks from Gaza and the truce may fail. Our experience of the Jewish state and agreements is very clear. It teaches that there has been nothing that could be called 'commitment' since the time of Oslo. This is only a small and temporary truce... The deal is closely related to the fate of [Israeli soldier Shalit], and if he is not released, the truce will fail, if we even dare to assume that it will last at all..."

WALLES